

Trent House
South Warren Street
Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-200

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Trent House
South Warren Street
Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey

Owner: City of Trenton

Date of Erection: 1719

Architect:

Builder: William Trent

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - basement walls stone, faced with brick; basement floor, brick and flagstone

Exterior walls - front Flemish bond; side and rear walls English bond

Interior walls - one room on the first floor panel, other rooms plaster. Fireplaces in each room on the first and second floors

Floors - random width; partitions plank, plastered

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - hip with wood cupola, slate

Historical Data:

The Trent House is the oldest of Trenton's landmarks. It has been known by different names during history. At one time it was known as Kingsbury Hall, then Bloomsbury Court, and finally as Woodlawn.

The house was built by William Trent on an 800 acre tract. Originally it was constructed as an oblong building, and it exists today exactly as built except for a frame addition said to have been added in 1850 by James Redmond, who was owner at that time. Chief Justice Trent did not make the house his permanent residence until 1721; he died there on Christmas 1724.

The property was conveyed by James Trent, his eldest son, to William Morris, a merchant of the Island of Barbadoes, on March 28, 1729. Morris in turn conveyed it to Governor George Thomas of Pennsylvania in October 1733. Governor Thomas held it until 1753. During his ownership Lewis Morris, the first Colonial governor of New Jersey, leased the house. This was in 1742.

Governor Thomas conveyed the property to Robert Hopper on January 31, 1853. It was known as Kingsbury during his ownership. The following advertisement appeared in the Pennsylvania Journal for March 12, 1767:

"it is accommodated with a gentile brick dwelling house, 40x48 feet, two stories high, four rooms on a floor, with a large handsome staircase and entry with a cellar under the whole building, and a courtyard on each front of the house, one fronting down the River Delaware to the ferry thru' a large handsome avenue of English cherry trees, the other confronting up the river to Trenton,

with a large brick kitchen 30x20 feet, two stories high, with a well in it, and four handsome apartments above for servants....." (History of Trenton p. 295) The brick kitchen built by Governor Thomas has long since disappeared.

William Bryant bought the Trent House on October 28, 1769. He was a practicing physician in Trenton during the early part of the Revolution, and the house was referred to by the Hessians as "The Doctor's House".

John Cox acquired ownership on October 28, 1778. He called the mansion Bloomsbury Court. Cox was an iron manufacturer at Batso, Burlington County. On September 24, 1792, the property was conveyed to Marin Bazile Gaston, L'Official de Woffoin, gentleman of Philadelphia. On October 27, 1795, he conveyed the property to Esther Cox, executrix, and John Stevens and Mathias Barton, executors of John Cox.

Between 1798 and 1838, the mansion passed through the hands of William Cox, Sr., Edward Burd and Edward Shippen Burd, Daniel William Cox, and Philemon Dickerson. The latter was governor of New Jersey from 1836 to 1837, and since he owned the Trent House during that time, it is most likely that he used it as the executive mansion.

James M. Redmond had possession of Trent House from 1838 to 1852, when it passed into the hands of Joseph Wood, at one time mayor of Trenton, who in turn conveyed the property in 1861 to Edward H. Stokes. During the ownership of Joseph Wood, Governor Rodman Price resided there through the years 1854-1857. It served as his executive mansion and was known as Woodlawn.

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On March 17, 1887, the property passed to Edward A. Stokes, who was later to be one of the state's governors. By a deed dated October 30, 1929, Mr. Stokes gave it to the City of Trenton.

Bibliography:

Walker, E.R. et. al., (joint authors)
The History of Trenton 1679-1929
2 Vols. Princeton University Press,
1929 (See Chapter VI "Landmarks,
Taverns, Markets, and Fairs" by
William J. Backes)

Field Book and Drawings of Survey

John E. Hill
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.
District Officer

Rev. Sept 3, 1936 *T.W.*

ADDENDUM TO
TRENT HOUSE
(KINGSBURY HALL)
(BLOOMSBURY COURT)
(WOODLAWN)
539 South Warren Street
Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

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XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

TRENT HOUSE

15 Market Street (changed from 539 South Warren Street)
City of Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

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ADDENDUM TO

Trent House
(Kingsbury Hall)
(Bloomsbury Court)
(Woodlawn)
539 South Warren Street
City of Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Northeast Area Office
National Park Service
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TRENT HOUSE

ADDENDUM TO TRENT HOUSE

This report is an addendum to a four page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: 15 Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey

USGS West Trenton Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.519910.4451180

Significance: The Trent House is one of Trenton's most historically and architecturally significant sites. Built by William Trent, the founder of Trenton, the house stands in form and detail as an excellent example of the Georgian architectural style. It was home to many notable figures including a chief justice, three New Jersey governors, a Revolutionary War colonel and a prominent early developer.

Description: The Trent House site represents Trenton's evolution from the early agrarian economy through industrialization to the modern service and government center. The site evolved from the original 800 acre parcel to a 300 acre parcel in the early 1700s and remained a large acre tract until the mid 1800s at which time the boundaries were drawn for a two acre site.

Rising two stories from grade to its hipped roof with cupola, the house retains the distinctive features that characterize the Georgian architectural style. The brick facade is five registers in width with a central entrance. Fenestration is provided by 12/12 sash.

The interior plan is also characteristic of the Georgian style with its center hall plan with two rooms to either side. A grand stair leads to the upper floors. The rooms generally contain plaster walls with original wooden baseboard and window trim.

(continued)

History: The house was built by William Trent, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant and ship owner. His business success was accompanied by public prominence in Philadelphia and later in New Jersey. With his purchase of the milling operations at the confluence of the Delaware and Assunpink in 1714 the town became known as "Trent's Town." Though an exact dating of the house has yet to be determined, a firm dating of Trent's permanent removal to Trenton has been concluded to be late 1721. It has been speculated that Trent had built the house in 1719 and used it as a summer home until 1721 and while this may be true, there is no primary source documentation to verify this notion.

In the ensuing years numerous significant persons and events were connected to the house. Hessian soldiers recognized the strategic location of the house and utilized it to monitor the American movements across the Delaware. In the early 19th century a nationally prominent developer purchased the large estate and sectioned it into small parcels, creating an urban grid. The Stokes family, a locally prominent family, resided in the house in the late 19th/early 20th century centuries and transformed the house from its early colonial appearance into a grand Victorian mansion. Ironically, it was this family who in turn donated the house to the city, stipulating that the city remove their alterations and additions and restore the building to its original condition. In the 1930s the house and grounds were restored through a WPA undertaking. The Trent House has been under the auspices of the City of Trenton since 1929.

Sources: Rose, Cynthia A. and Kristin Justham, Noble Preservation Services, Inc. "History of the William Trent House," printed in Susan Maxman Architects, "Historical Documentation and Strategic Planning Study." May 1996.

Historian: Cynthia Rose, May 1996.